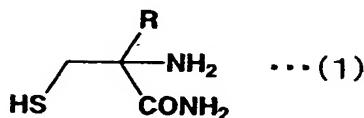


Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces any and all prior claim lists.

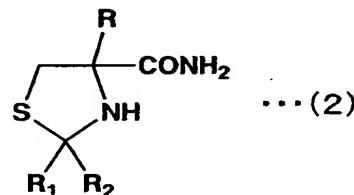
Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (original). A 2-alkylcysteinamide represented by the general formula (1) or a salt thereof:

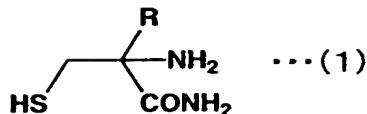


wherein R represents a lower alkyl group having 1-4 carbon atoms.

Claim 2 (original). A process for producing a 2-alkylcysteinamide or a salt thereof through a hydrolysis of a 4-alkylthiazolidine-4-carboxamide represented by the general formula (2) or salt thereof:



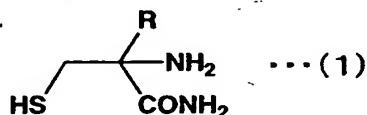
wherein R represents a lower alkyl group having 1-4 carbon atoms; and each of R₁ and R₂ independently represents hydrogen or a lower alkyl group having 1-4 carbon atoms, or R₁ and R₂ are linked together to form an alicyclic structure having 4-7 carbon atoms, excluding the case where both R₁ and R₂ are hydrogen, to give a 2-alkylcysteinamide represented by the general formula (1) or a salt thereof



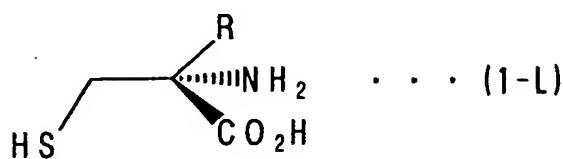
wherein R represents a lower alkyl group having 1-4 carbon atoms.

Claim 3 (original). The process for producing a 2-alkylcysteinamide or a salt thereof according to claim 2, wherein an aqueous solution of a 4-alkylthiazolidine-4-carboxamide or a salt thereof is used as the 4-alkylthiazolidine-4-carboxamide represented by the general formula (2) or a salt thereof.

Claim 4 (original). A process for producing an optically active 2-alkyl-L-cysteine, which is characterized in that it comprises allowing cells of a microorganism or a treated product thereof having an activity of stereoselectively hydrolyzing a 2-alkyl-L-cysteinamide to act on a 2-alkylcysteinamide represented by the general formula (1),



wherein R represents a lower alkyl group having 1-4 carbon atoms, to produce a 2-alkyl-L-cysteine represented by the general formula (1-L):



wherein R represents a lower alkyl group having 1-4 carbon atoms.

Claim 5 (original). The process for producing an optically active 2-alkyl-L-cysteine according to claim 4, wherein the microorganism having an activity of stereoselective hydrolysis for a 2-alkyl-L-cysteinamide is a bacterium which belongs to the genus *Protaminobacter*, the genus *Mycoplana*, or the genus *Xanthobacter*.

Claim 6 (currently amended). The process for producing an optically active 2-alkyl-L-cysteine according to ~~claim 4 or 5~~ claim 4, wherein the stereoselective hydrolysis by the action of cells of a microorganism and/or a treated product thereof is carried out under inert gas flow and/or in a coexistence of a reducing agent.

Claim 7 (currently amended). The process for producing an optically active 2-alkyl-L-cysteine according to ~~any one of claims 4 to 6~~ claim 4, wherein R represents methyl in the general formulas (1) and (1-L).